

réserves émises ici, plus avant, et n. 236, sur l'«évolution» de l'Image de l'Enfer. Du silence, peut-être accidentel et momentané, de nos documents, on ne saurait tirer, sans plus, que l'activité des nécromants ait été tenue pour «néfaste et peu avouable». Si elle l'a été, il faudrait plutôt chercher du côté de la fréquentation de ces personnages redoutables qu'étaient réputés les Trépassés.

202. KAR 234: 4', 14', 20' s, 27', etc; et *Annuaire* 1979-1980.
203. KAR 227 i :46, etc; et *Annuaire* cité.
204. LKA 84: 14 ss, etc; et *Annuaire* cité.
205. BID A Ia: 1-12, etc, et *Annuaire* cité.
206. KAR 184 + : 89 ss, etc. et *Annuaire* cité.
207. CT V 6:53; TDP, p. 86: 54, etc; 188: 7, etc; et *Annuaire* cité.
208. KAR 34: 8 (sic! voir ci-dessus, n. 31).
209. CT XXIII 15 s: 2; KAR 227 iii: 60, etc; *Annuaire* 1979-1980.
210. Textes divinatoires cités plus haut, n. 187.
211. LKA 84: 22 etc; et *Annuaire* 1979-1980.
212. *Ibid.* 24-29; et *Annuaire* cité.
213. *Ibid.* 23; et *Annuaire* cité.
214. *Annuaire* cité.
215. CT XXIII 15 s: 7' s, 23' s, etc; et *Annuaire* cité.
216. CT XXIII 19 s: 9': KAR 184+: 80; et *Annuaire* cité.
217. Comp. BID A Ia: 12, et *Annuaire* cité; et ci-dessus, n. 190.
218. Voir surtout *Annuaire* cité.
219. KAR 227 i 5 ss; et *Annuaire* cité.
220. CT XXIII 15 s: 1 ss; KAR 184+: 1 ss; et *Annuaire* cité.
221. KAR 267: 31 ss; et *Annuaire* cité.
222. LKA 84: I ss; et *Annuaire* cité.
223. BID A Ia: 6 ss et 176b ss; et *Annuaire* cité.
224. LKA 184+: 76 ss; LKA 84, rev.: 19 ss; *Annuaire* cité.
225. Comp. H. Zimmern, SBT. p. 216, n° 2: 11-12: »la foule des *etemmu*« sur le chemin de l'Enfer.
226. *Ištar aux Enfers*: 9; *Gilgameš ninivite* VII:99 s; sur la bouche d'Ereškigal dans la version assyrienne de *Nergal et Ereškigal*, V: II' s et 26' s.
227. Ci-dessus, n. 187.
228. Ci-dessus, n. 8. Même si c'est un pamphlet, l'auteur, pour qu'il fût efficace, devait garder la vraisemblance.
229. Notamment 145 ss.
230. *Annuaire* 1977-1978, p. 150 ss.
231. Comme les galla dans *Inanna aux Enfers*: 279 s, 295 ss, 316 ss, 325 ss, 344 ss, 359 s; comp. aussi, par exemple, CT XVII 41: 2 s, etc. Voir du reste W. G. Lambert dans *JNES* 33, 1974, p. 296.
232. *Dictionnaire des mythologies*. Comp. aussi *Annuaire* 1976-1977, p. 135 s.
233. P. 4.
234. Ci-dessus n. 226.
235. *Ištar aux Enfers*: 4-11.
236. Je modère ici quelque peu, préférant attendre des témoignages plus explicites, l'idée que j'avais avancée dans *Annuaire* 1972-1973, p. 101 s (et voir la référence à *Divination et rationalité*, ci-dessus, n. 201). L'hypothèse reste plausible, m'est avis, mais tout bien pesé, il est sage de souligner un peu plus son caractère hypothétique, pour le moment.

THE THEOLOGY OF DEATH

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A 'theology' of a subject is presumably a systematic descriptive account of the relevant religious views and outlooks. As such, an account of the subject under consideration cannot be expected in cuneiform texts, since the ancients were not given to producing descriptive accounts of this kind. However, relevant material can always be sought in myths of origins. Such texts normally explain the assumed function of things in recounting their origins. Though death is a feature of plant and animal life as well as of humans, only the last is dealt with at all explicitly in ancient texts, and our inquiry will therefore be restricted to death of humans and the gods. This latter addition is apposite because ancient Mesopotamian gods were patterned superficially very much on the human race.

The cuneiform texts most concerned with death are the Sumerian epic *Gilgameš and the Cedar Forest* and the Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*, which is a much expanded text based primarily on the one Sumerian tale. In both the central theme is the fear of death as exemplified in *Gilgameš*, and in the outworking of this theme in the Babylonian text especially much then current thinking on death is revealed. The origin of death is dealt with in one of Sābītum's speeches to *Gilgameš* in the Old Babylonian version of Tablet X:

*i-nu-ma ilānu^{meš} ib-nu-ú a-wi-lu-tam
mu-tam iš-ku-nu a-na a-wi-lu-tim
ba-la-tām i-na qá-ti-šu-nu iš-ša-ab-tu (III 3-5)*

When the gods created mankind,
They assigned death to mankind,
But held life in their own keeping.

From this we should expect to find the institution of death dealt with in myths of creation, but as it happens *Enki and Ninmah*, the *Myth of the Pickaxe*, KAR 4 and duplicates, *Enūma Eliš* and the *Atra-hasīs Epic* seem to lack the whole topic. And generally one searches in vain anywhere in cuneiform texts for an account of the setting up of the underworld. Some light, however, can be derived from further lines of the

Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*. In a speech surviving in the late version only, Uta-napištim counsels Gilgameš about death. The beginning of the speech is too damaged to be intelligible, then there is a gap, but the end is largely complete and merits full citation since there is yet no edition of the new material given in CT 46.

Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic*, Late Edition
Tablet X, Column VI

A = K 8589+Sm 1681 (Thomson, pl. 43 and CT 46 33) : 5-32
b = BM 34160+ (CT 46 30): 20-32
c = BM 34853+35546+Rm 751 (CT 46 32 with new join): 1-32

1-3 unintelligible

4 [...] a-me-lu-ti
5 [x x i]l-qu-ú a-na ši-im-ti-šú
6 [x x t]a-ad-da-li-ip mi-na-a ta-al?-qu?
7 [ina d]a-la-pi tu-un-na-h[a ra?-man?-ka?]
8 širānī^{mes}-ka ni-is-sa-t[a] tu-mál-'la'
9 ru-qu-tu tu-qar-r[a-ab] ūmī^{mes}-ka
10 a-me-lu-tum šá kīma qanī a-pi ha-ši-PI+IP šūm-šú
11 et-la dam-qa ardata^{ta} da-me-eq-tum
12 UR-[.] x x x mu-ti
13 ul ma-am-ma mu-ú-tu im-mar
14 ul ma-am-m[a (šá mu-ti) i]m-mar pa-ni-šú
15 'ul ma-am-ma' ša mu-ti rig-m[a-(šú) i-šem-me]
16 ag-gu mu-tum ha-ši-pi amēlu-ut-tim
17 im-ma-ti-ma ni-ip-pu-šá bīta
18 im-ma-ti-ma ni-kan-n[a-ak] ku-nu-<uk-ka>
19 im-ma-ti-ma ahhū^{mes} i-zu-uz-[zu]
20 im-ma-ti-ma ze-ru-tum i-ba-ši ina ma-ti?
21 im-ma-ti-ma nāru iš-šá-am-ma mi-la ub-lu
22 ku-li-li i[q]-qé-lép-pa-a ina nāri
23 pa-nu-šá i-na-at-ṭa-lu pa-an^{dšamši}
24 ul-tu ul-la-nu-um-ma ul i-ba-áš-ši mim-ma
25 šal-lu ù mi-tum ki-i pī a-ha-meš-ma
26 šá mu-ti ul iṣ-ši-ru ṣa-lam-šú
27 lú.u₁₈.lu-ú amēlu e-dil
28 ul-tu ik-ru-bu [x (x)]
29^da-nun-na-ki ilānu^{mes} rabātu^{mes} pah-ru

30^dma-am-me-tum ba-na-at šim-ti
itti-šú-nu ši-ma-tú i-šim-[me]
31 iš-tak-nu mu-ta u ba-la-ṭa
32 šá mu-ti ul ud-du-ú ūmī^{mes}-šú

4 . . .] mankind
5 They took [.] for his destiny.
6 [.] you have toiled without cease, what have you got?
7 Through toil you are wearing [yourself] out,
8 You are filling your body with grief,
9 You are bringing forward the end of your days.
10 Mankind, which is like a reed in the cane-brake, is snapped off.
11 Man and woman in full flower of youth
12 . [.] . . . death.
13 No one can see death.
14 No one can see the face of death.
15 No one [can hear] the voice of death.
16 But savage death snaps off mankind.
17 For how long do we bring families into existence?
18 For how long do we make wills?
19 For how long do brothers divide the inheritance?
20 For how long is there to be jealousy in the land(?)/among sons(?).
21 For how long has the river risen and brought the flood?
22 So that dragonflies drift on the river,
23 Their faces staring into the face of the sun god?
24 Suddenly there is nothing.
25 The prisoner and the dead are alike,
26 Death itself cannot be depicted,
27 But *Lullû* – man – is incarcerated.
28 After they had pronounced the blessing on me,
29 The Anunnaku, the great gods, were assembled,
30 And Mammītum, creatress of destiny,
Decreed destinies with them.
31 They established life and death.
32 Death they fixed to have no ending.

Variants

8. c: SAG.PA.LAGAB 9. c: -šī 11. c: om. ta 15. c: šá mu-tum 16. c: mu-t]ú A:] a-m[e- 17. c: ip-pu-uš 19. c: (end)] ha.1a 20. c: ze-ru-tu i]b- b: ma-r[u]? 21. A: iš-šá-a e₆.la₆ b: mi-lu 22. A: om. iq- b:]-lep-pi 23. c: -š]a i-na-at-ṭa-la b: pa-ni 25. b: mi-i-tum A: om. pī 26. b: -tu]m? 27-28. c: lú.u₁₈.lu-a LÚ.BAD ul ik-ru-[u- b: L]ú.BAD ul ik-ru-ba ka-ra-bi-i₁₄ 30. c: ^dma-mi

ba-na-at šim-ti-] b.] 'šim-ti-šū i-šim¹-me 31. b: iš¹-ta-kan bc: ba-l[a-tu 32. bc: mu-ū-tū b(c):
+ šā-niš ul-(te-du-ū)

Textual Notes

For a partial translation by W. von Soden, see A. Schott, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos* (edition of 1970) pp. 83-84, henceforth "v.S."

6. *minā talqi* is a literary topos, and a variant *talqu* is entirely possible in a LB copy.

9. V.S. tentatively renders, the verb, "rufst du dir wieder zurück" (from *qerū?*), but the contrast between "far" and "near" seems a compelling argument for the restoration of *qerēbu*. The far-off days are not past time, but the future old age, since Gilgamesh is not yet an old man, cf. XI 258-282.

10. 'Name' (*šumu*) can refer to offspring (so v.S.), but it need not: nomen est persona, and this gives a much clearer and simpler development of the argument. It is death in general and by implication one's own death that is being considered, not death of one's offspring. Gilgamesh in the story has no offspring, and he was an *etlu damqu*. *7012*

13-15. 'No one' is normally *mamma(n) . . . ul*. Is the inverted order here meant to give emphasis?

23-24. The rendering given presumes that *kulilu* is feminine. There seems to be no clear evidence elsewhere on this point. Then the lesson from the dragonfly is continued: they drift down the river with their big eyes looking upwards, but suddenly they disappear beneath the surface and exist no more. Without this continuation lines 21-22 seem to have no purpose. For *ultu ullānumma* with the idea of suddenness, note *Descent of Ištar* 63 (R. Borger, *BAL* II 90): *iš-tu ul-la-nu-um-ma* ^d*iš-tar a-na erset la târi ū-ri-du* "As soon as Ištar had gone down to the underworld." Most translators have taken lines 22 and 23 together, whatever the details of their renderings. V.S., however, takes 23 and 24 together: "Ein Antlitz, das in die Sonne sehen könnte, Gibt es seit jeher nicht." This is excellent grammar, but seems to give no meaning.

27. The reading of the Babylonian copies, *LÚ BAD*, is no doubt a corruption of *LÚ DIL* and the glossenkeil. Though read *adda/pagru* "corpse" it is relevant to a context of death, it gives an impossible sense: "Man is a corpse" (which is less than a half-truth). The reading of the Assyrian copy *e-dil* agrees with *šal-lu* in line 25: man cannot escape from death.

32. The two Babylonian copies add the variant *ul-te-du-ū* to *ul ud-du-ū* with the prefix *šā-niš* "variant", an interesting item of scribal practice. The TE is no doubt a graphic corruption of UD.

Exegesis

Lines 4-5 seem to deal with death abstractly, but in 6-9 Uta-napištim declares that Gilgamesh's search for immortality has only brought his death nearer by wearing him out physically. Lines 10-15 change the topic by lamenting the premature death of those in the prime of life. "Snap off" (*hsp*) does not describe death in old age. Another change comes in 17. First (17-20) a social evil of the life cycle culminating in death is described. Life begins with having a family (*būta epēšu*), this results in the father making a will (18), resulting in turn in the division of the family estate on his demise (19), and in bitter recriminations among the heirs as a result (20). By putting the questions Uta-napištim is complaining that there is no way out of this life cycle: man is trapped. Then (21-24) by using the same opening word, he turns attention back to the reality of death. This time he pictures the annual flood, in which countless dragonflies settle on the water and are carried along by it, only to disappear for ever under an eddy. Gilgamesh was left to ponder that the life of men is like that. The stress again is on sudden death. But in 25-27 the state of the dead is compared to being in a prison. Though death is an abstract idea which cannot be depicted, its reality as an inescapable constraint is a fact. The remainder of the tablet (28-32) is taken up with describing the instituting of death, and line 28 certainly refers to Tablet XI 192 and its context. Death, then, was instituted by the gods after Uta-napištim had been made immortal on coming out of the ark. The point of the last couplet (31-32) is that while life, as granted to man, has an ending, death, as the gods decreed it, has to continue for ever.

* * *

Despite the clue it gives, the *Gilgamesh Epic* does not in fact tell of the gods' instituting death after Uta-napištim's apotheosis. Since, however, its story is a digest of the *Atra-hasīs Epic*, we are justified in seeking evidence there. In the Old Babylonian *Atra-hasīs* Tablet III, the settling of the ark after the flood subsided is described in column V, and the gods' discussion when this is discovered covers the bottom of column V and the whole of column VI, though there is a gap in the middle which presumably told of Uta-napištim's destiny. This seems certain because the divine discussion after the gap concerns the limiting of the human race, so evidently those who escaped drowning in the flood have, in the gap, been permitted out of the ark so that the earth would be repopulated in due course. What escaped the first editors and the numerous reviewers since is that the obvious way to prevent overpopulation and its excessive noise was to institute death to offset birth. In creating man in Tablet I the gods

insured that the new creature could reproduce, but they did nothing to limit the population. Thus Tablet III column VI 47-50 must have dealt with death, and there is an obvious restoration:

[at-ti sa-a]s-sú-ru ba-ni-a-at ši-ma-ti

[mu-ta šu-uk-ni] a-na ni-ši

. . . -li-li

. . . li-ib-ši

[You], birth-goddess, creatress of destinies,

[Assign death] to the peoples

. . .] . .

. . .] let there be

This fits the passages previously quoted perfectly. In *Gilgameš* X vi 30 the mother goddess is found taking part among the great gods in the institution of death, and she is called *bānāt šimti*. In the Old Babylonian *Atra-hasīs*, III vi 47 is the only occurrence of this phrase. It occurs earlier in the Late Assyrian recension, S iii 11, but the Old Babylonian version is lacking at that point, and it may be one of those harmonising tendencies in the late edition. But in any case one must accept the evidence of both the Old Babylonian and the late *Gilgameš* that the gods did institute death. *Sābītum* has telescoped all the events from the first creation of man to his reaching his present state. *Uta-napištim*, having been involved in the final episode, specifies that. Thus the institution of death in *Atra-hasīs* is similar to that in the Garden of Eden. In each case man was first created without any limit being fixed on his life-span. As a result of misdemeanour death was laid upon him.

For us there is a problem in that the previous means of reducing the human population had in fact killed off people. In fact the flood had almost wiped out the whole human race. Clearly the ancient thinkers in this case are distinguishing death that results ultimately from natural aging, and premature death from unnatural causes, and in speaking of the institution of death they mean the former. The confusion is already present in the late Babylonian *Gilgameš* in *Uta-napištim*'s speech just dealt with, since it deals with both kinds of death, passing from one to the other. One would very much like to know whether the lost Old Babylonian original was equally inconsistent in this respect.

Thus in Babylonian thought death was introduced after other means of decimating the human race, culminating in the flood, had proved ineffective. But death was not the absolute end. Man had a soul (*etiṁmu*), inherited from the slain god whose body was used in the creation of man. At death this soul, if properly buried and provided with the customary offerings, was expected to make its way to the realm of the dead below the earth. Obviously this realm had been set up at some point during the

creation and organization of the universe, but the ancient texts so far known seem not to deal with it. It was the lowest realm of the cosmos, the *Apsū* intervening between the earth and the nether world. The balance which the gods had worked out in the upper world whereby births were offset by deaths did not exist below. There the population always and only increased, and several names stress the vast extent of this realm. It is commonly called 'earth' (Sumerian *kur* or *ki*, Akkadian *eršet*), and 'great earth' (*ki.gal*) or 'extensive earth' (*eršet rapaštu*) are names of frequent occurrence. And just as the Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic* stresses the unending state of death and its inescapability, so does the common title 'land of no return' (*kur.nu.gi(4).a = eršet lā târī*).¹ There are two traditions of the approach to the nether world from the earth of men. In the Sumerian epic, *The Descent of Inanna*, its Babylonian equivalent *The Descent of Ištar*, and the Babylonian epic *Nergal and Ereškigal*, there was a road leading through seven gates into the infernal regions. The last-named text names the seven gate-keepers, and this list is also known from a late expository text, *KAR 142* IV 12-15. A separately attested tradition is that one had to cross the river *Hubur*, the exact location of which, like the entrance through seven gates, is never specified in geographically meaningful terms. One may wonder whether *Uta-napištim*'s boat-man in the Babylonian *Gilgameš Epic* is not an altered form of this tradition, since *Uta-napištim* never crossed, or needed to cross, the waters, which are called "the waters of death" (X LA II 25, 27). These two traditions about entry to the nether world are nowhere harmonized in ancient texts, and we should not attempt to do so.

The nether world was presided over by one ruling deity, though many other deities were also resident there. For example, one tradition has 600 gods below, compared with only 300 in heaven.² A consideration of all the gods known from various texts to have been considered at some time or other resident in the underworld would result in a study far too large for the present publication, and would not contribute sufficiently to the theology of death, so attention will be restricted to the ruling deity. While the names of *Nergal* and *Ereškigal* will occur at once to any cuneiform scholar, the matter is much more complicated when the attempt is made to see things historically. A modern composite picture, putting everything from the better known texts into one telescopic view, is worthless, not to say positively misleading. The picture is indeed very complicated, and often we shall be compelled to observe facts which cannot yet be explained. The reasons for this confusion of gods are more than one. There were, of course, the Sumerian cities and their temples, and no doubt at the beginnings of history though there was a recognized pantheon in Sumer there were many local differences of opinion about particu-

lar deities. Each temple, though devoted to a particular deity, would have statues of many more. Gudea *Cylinder B* illustrates how a whole court of deities existed within one temple, and within this temple at that particular time there was clearly an existing 'theology' of each and every one. Of course in other temples in other towns somewhat different views on some of the same deities were no doubt held even at that very period of time. In addition to having a temple in a 'home' town, many Sumerian deities in the third millennium had temples or shrines at Nippur, the religious capital. The theologians there were thus confronted with a larger problem than existed within the temple of a god in the 'provinces'. They had to attempt to bring order into all the major deities of Sumer, and not merely to arrange a local court of gods. The two levels of thinking were of course going on at the same time, and the best endeavours could not iron out all the contradictions resulting from city-state traditions. The passage of time, the replacement of Sumerians by Babylonians in the second millennium, and various changes, ideological, economic, social, political, etc., all had their influence on the gradual shaping of the Sumero-Babylonian pantheon, and the surviving documents have come to us by accidents of discovery and need not present a balanced picture. Our procedure will, then, attempt to find the ruling deity of the nether world period by period as the sources permit.

The earliest usable texts are those from the end of the Early Dynastic period, especially from Fara and Šalābikh, but from other sites also. Among them there is one systematic statement of the Sumerian pantheon, the Šalābikh *Zami Hymns* (R. D. Biggs, *OIP* 99 nos. 258-277 and pp. 45-56). In form, Enlil, clearly sole head, praises the other deities of the pantheon, one at a time. Ereškigal does not occur. Nergal also does not occur unless the god written ^dGĪR.UNUG can be read ^dnè.eri₁₁ and be taken as a short form of ^dnè.eri₁₁.gal.³ The section involved (lines 65-69) contains nothing that to our knowledge requires the deity to be Nergal, though nothing to exclude the possibility either. The first line GĪR.UNUG seems to be the name of the deity's town. This is of course not a phonetic writing of Kutha, but if Neri is a short form of Nergal (strictly Nerigal), it would have been possible to write his city's name GĪR.UNUG just as Nibru was written EN.LÍL. The city is described as "great abode of heaven and underworld, pleasant shade of Enki and Ninkī" (dag.gal an ki gissu sig ^den.ki ^dnin.ki), epithets which neither support nor refute the possibility being considered. A more certain candidate is Ninazu of Enegi, who is clearly identifiable in the section lines 128-139. His headship of the underworld is well known from later periods, e.g. line 27 of the double-column edition of the Weidner god list (*AfK* 2 11 2, etc.): ^dnin.a.zu = ^dbēl er-se-ti. However, the *Zami Hymn* section seems to be concerned mainly

with domesticated cattle and has nothing about the underworld. Meslam-ta'e'a, a name of Nergal used in Early Dynastic times, seems to be lacking. In short, no head of the underworld can be definitely identified in this listing of gods. Of course much of it is still not understood, and such phrases as may be translated need not be in final rendering. Also, because the epithets may refer to the city rather than the deity, we should not press its silence.

The next major document of comparable value is the *Sumerian Temple Hymns*, edited by Å. Sjöberg in *TCS* 3, apparently from the Akkad period with some later additions. This is much more easily understandable than the Šalābikh *Zami Hymns* and systematically gives some epithets of the divine owner of each temple dealt with. It clearly intends to give all the main city temples of Sumer and Akkad of its time. Here there are two Ninazus: of Enegi (no. 14) and of Eshnunna (no. 34). The latter section does not refer to the underworld and will receive no further attention here. The former is full of infernal things. The town Enegi is first described as "big pipe, pipe of Ereškigal's underworld", where the "pipe" is the clay tube down which offerings to the dead of a liquid kind were poured. It is next described as "Kutha of Sumer", presumably contrasting it with Nergal's Kutha, which was in Akkad, "where mankind gathers", i.e. at their deaths. The city of the god of the underworld partakes of the character of the underworld, just as Eridu in some sense is the Apsû. Egidda, temple of Enegi is now described in the words: "your shadow has stretched over the princes of the underworld (kur) in the underworld (kur)". This again implies that Enegi, as the city of the god of the underworld, is metaphorically the underworld. It also reminds one of the Šalābikh lines about GĪR.UNUG as "pleasant shade of Enki and Ninkī", since these two deities were the prime ancestors of Enlil and Ninlil and as such denizens of the nether regions. However, it would be unwise to restrict the term "princes of the underworld" in the Sumerian Temple Hymns to these two. Then the Ninazu section turns to the god himself and gives his father as a "great lord" (not further specified), and his mother as Ereškigal. This corrects an impression gained from the Early Dynastic document *DP* 51, that Ninazu and Ereškigal were husband and wife. His relationship to the nether world is given in the *Temple Hymn* as šita ki.gal.la. The precise meaning of šita in such contexts is not certain, see J. J. A. Van Dijk, *Sumerische Götterlieder* II p. 126f., though it seems to be an elected office rather than a permanent autocracy. Had the author meant that Ninazu were the supreme ruler, he could have expressed himself much more clearly by using other terms. If this conclusion is correct, there is a contradiction between the implications of the descriptions of city and temple and the term used for their owner. The

former imply that Ninazu was head of the underworld, the latter seems to withhold that rank from him. In the context of the Akkad period that is perhaps not surprising. There had been a Sumerian god of the infernal regions, Ninazu, and an Akkadian god, Nergal. With the rise of Akkad as a political empire, this document, said to have been composed by a daughter of Sargon of Akkad, quite naturally wishes to make the most of Nergal and, so far as possible, to denigrate his rival Ninazu. Of course this had to be done tactfully. The Nergal section (no. 36) makes him important by heaping up his names: Erra (written ^dgir.ra), Lugal-meslamta, Huški'a, Meslamta'e'a. Then he is called "master (lugal) of (the land) of the setting sun (utu.šu₄.[a])". This title lugal has an absolute ring about it. It is what Sargon and Narām-Sîn used of themselves.

The earliest dedication inscription to Ereškigal, by Lu-Utu, ensi of Umma under the Third Dynasty of Ur, uses the feminine equivalent of the same phrase of her: "mistress of the land of the setting sun" (nin ki.utu.šu₄:YBT 1 14). So far as is known Ereškigal had no special place in the pantheon of Umma at this time, so this may be taken as evidence that Ereškigal was on the rise at the end of the third millennium. She was displacing her son, at least in Sumer. Thus in the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna*, first known from early second-millennium copies, Ereškigal rules the underworld, assisted by other divine powers, but without equal. Nothing is heard of Ninazu or Nergal, though her husband is named as Gugalanna (^dgu₄.gal.an.na), of whom more shortly. The Akkadian *Descent of Ištar* preserves the same status of Ereškigal as the Sumerian. With the rise of Babylonian literature during the Old Babylonian period, Nergal's position as king of the underworld must presumably have been boosted, since he was city god of Kutha, a town not far from Babylon. The decline of Enegi as a town must have contributed to Ninazu's loss of pre-eminence in underworld politics. This background helps to explain the Babylonian epic *Nergal and Ereškigal*. It begins with Ereškigal as queen of the nether world. Nergal at that time belongs to another realm. After the action of the plot she accepts Nergal as king of her domain. The earliest preserved copy is from Amarna in Egypt, so that it could have a Middle Babylonian date of composition, but it could equally be of Old Babylonian origin. Evidence for Nergal and Ereškigal as husband and wife first appears in Old Babylonian religious texts, e.g. *PBS I/2* 112 61-62, where they are called respectively Enlil and Ninlil of the nether world.

An = Anum, of Middle Babylonian origin, is the latest document to be considered here on this subject. It deals with gods of the netherworld and death in the latter part of Tablet V and the earlier part of Tablet VI. This

part of the great list is less systematically arranged than Tablets I-IV. It is based generally on an Old Babylonian list, *TCL* 15 no. 10. This Forerunner begins the underworld in line 400 with Ninazu and spouse, followed by Ereškigal (403) equated with Allatum (404). Next, unexpectedly, comes Tišpak of Ešnunna followed by courtiers of Ereškigal (at least as explained elsewhere). Curiously Meslamta'e'a, followed by Ninšubur, occur before Nergal begins in earnest in 418. His wife is named as Mammītum. *An = Anum* has both expanded and slightly modified its Forerunner. It prefixes Birtum and wife (Ma)nungal with court (lines 175-193) to what it has borrowed. They are known within the pantheon of Nippur, but it is always possible that originally they came from a Sumerian town which declined over the third millennium so that its chief deities only survived in Nippur. By rearrangement Ereškigal is put first in the following section, with husband Gugalanna (^dgú.gal.an.na) and court (195-218). Next comes Ninazu with family (219-228), but without any specified relationship to Ereškigal. Ningišzida follows with family and court (229-246(?)). His town had been Gišbanda, believed to have been somewhere between Lagaš and Ur, though it is uncertain whether the compiler of *An = Anum* knew this. In 247 Tišpak of Ešnunna is taken up, with family and courtiers, Šušinak of Susa has a single line (259), and Ištarān of Der is dealt with in 260-267, before Lugalgirra and Meslamta'e'a are reached in 268ff. They are treated as a pair of gods, obviously not forms of Nergal. He follows in Tablet VI 1ff., with wife's first name Laz, Mammītum second. Ereškigal is not mentioned in this section.

This brief historical survey of the theology of the chief god of the nether world both indicates the kinds of changes to which all sorts of Mesopotamian gods were subjected over the centuries, but also casts great doubt on the antiquity and extent to which Ereškigal was considered Nergal's wife, contrary to some current opinion. If one takes this idea seriously, then Ereškigal's husband Gugalanna will have to be identified with Nergal, and she must have been at home in Kutha. This latter point cannot be settled without more documents from Kutha over a wide period to see whether her name occurs in the onomasticon of the city. However, Gugalanna yields information. In the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna*, this goddess alleges that she is demanding entrance to the nether world to share in the lamenation for Ereškigal's husband Gugalanna, who has died. Dying gods are not common in Mesopotamian religion, and there is no evidence that Nergal was one of them. Who, then, was this Gugalanna? One lead is very suggestive. *An = Anum* explicitly, and the Forerunner by implication, identify Ereškigal with Allatum. Whereas the former is Sumerian, the latter has an Akkadian feminine ending *-tum*. There is a consistently male deity Alla, written either syllabically (^d)al-

la/lá, or ^dNAGAR. He is definitely a dying god, a type of Tammuz. He is best known from Tammuz texts, where he appears listed with Damu, Ningišzida, Ištarān and others. His town is specified as Esagi, of unknown location.⁴ The bilingual creation myth *KAR 4* and duplicates has the Alla-gods slain to provide the blood from which mankind was made. A late exposition of the ritual for reskinning a ritual drum equates Alla with Anšar as one of the "seven conquered Enlils".⁵ Alla looks very much a masculine base for Allatum, and the two could easily have been husband and wife. If this is correct, and the evidence does not quite constitute proof, then, in view of the disappearance of Alla from city religion before the end of the third millennium, it must be assumed that Ereškigal was spouse of the city god of Esagi, and probably at that time unrelated to Nergal of Kutha. A late Early Dynastic statue of Alla describes him as vizier of Ningišzida,⁶ a humble position in the pantheon of Sumer, but at that time Ereškigal, despite her name, was not generally, it seems, so acknowledged.

Alla has introduced the subject of dying gods. How can a god die if death was assigned to man? The ambiguity of death in relation to men is relevant here too. The gods could not die in Sumero-Babylonian thought in the sense of getting old and eventually dying of natural causes. But they could die a violent death. There are three kinds of causes for divine deaths. Younger gods could kill off the old in a succession struggle, or rebels could be made to pay the ultimate penalty, or in monster-slaying the distinction between dragon and god could be blurred so that here too a god could die.

The clearest case of a succession myth is *The Theogony of Dūninu* (CT 46 43), where each son in turn kills his father and succeeds him as ruler of the town Dunnu. The same motif is present in the *Epic of Creation* in that Marduk succeeds Anšar, but due to the complexity of its mythological composition the god slain is Qingu, who had the Tablet of Destinies and so did pass on his power when defeated to Marduk, who, however, handed over the tablet in question to Anu. Thus Anu succeeded Qingu, who was put to death judicially. The killing of Apsū and Tiāmat in the same epic is more in the nature of monster slaying. The text which Pinches published,⁷ in which Marduk defeats Enmešarra and puts him to death, is more a straight succession myth because Enmešarra is the sole leader of opposition to Marduk. Elsewhere (*ABRT II* 13 1-16) he is said to have passed on power to Anu and Enlil while becoming ruler of the underworld, so a later version would naturally have him do the same to Marduk. However, in the myth Nergal rules the nether world for Marduk, and Enmešarra was imprisoned there while awaiting judgment.

A succession myth in which the younger kills off the older does give a

possibly bad impression of the former, and the concept of rebellion was the means of providing the younger god, who was normally an object of worship in the society concerned, with a totally blameless claim to supremacy. This motif is also present in the highly composite *Enūma Eliš*. When Qingu is being judged in VI 15-30 the question was put, Who made Tiāmat rebel? The earlier narrative of the epic says nothing of any rebellion by Tiāmat: she was persuaded to act for her own safety. But the notion of rebellion is prepared for, if only in undertones. Anšar is king of the gods at the time, so when Qingu and host set out to destroy the junior gods at Tiāmat's behest, they can be considered to be in 'rebellion' against the established divine authority of Anšar. Narratives of this kind of 'rebellion' are not common in cuneiform texts, but the word is not rare, cf. *JCS* 10 100 17: ^djen.lil^{meš} šá ik-kir-[ú] "the Enlils who rebelled".

This latter passage introduces the plurality of defeated and slain divine enemies. There are frequent references to groups of such gods. The list of seven including Alla, identified with Anšar, quoted above, are summed up as "conquered Enlils" (^den.lil^{meš} ki-šit-ti). In *Lugale* Ninurta defeated the Asakku demon, but later texts know of a whole group of Asakku demons, e.g. *KAR* 142 I 42. The Greek Titans are a good parallel. Similarly, though there was one Tammuz in Sumerian religion, despite his different forms, for example in Uruk and Bad-Tibira, later texts know of a plurality of Tammuzes (^ddumu^{meš}.zi: R. Frankena, *Tākultu* 84 44). Tammuz is an unusual case of a dying god, since he was neither old and decrepit nor a rebel. Other defeated groups are simply called "defeated gods" (*ilānu kamātu*: e.g. *CT* 17 37 1-3), or "battered" (*abtūtulšulputūtu*: e.g. *Enūma Eliš* VI 151-154; *AfO* 25 39 31-33), when there is a cultic twist to the battle: the gods in question needed repairs to their statues, theoretically because they had been defeated in a battle. Among these groups "dead gods" also occur. In *Enūma Eliš* IV 119-120 Marduk defeats (*ka-mū*) Qingu and assigns him to the dead gods (^dug₅.ga^{meš}/e). Šamaš, in a late bilingual incantation, is said to be in charge of the dead gods (^dug₅.ga.àm = ^dug₅.ga-e) in the underworld (*UVB* 15 36 9).⁸ While this does not exhaust the material, it is a representative sample of the evidence for the death of gods.

Thus while both Sumerian and Akkadian had one word and synonyms only for 'death' they do in fact distinguish two kinds: death that comes naturally to mankind at the end of his days, and violent death, from which even the gods were not necessarily exempt. While their literature cannot on a linguistic level distinguish the two, with the result that comment on one can be intertwined with comment on the other, the distinction is a fundamental one without which a grasp of their theology of death will not be attained.